

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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50th Anniversary of the International Language Mission: “A True Miracle in Church History”

(Bonn, 22.10.2014) The International Language Mission, Inc. (*Internationale Sprachen Mission* or ISM) has celebrated its 50th anniversary with a celebration worship service in the Free Evangelical Church in Halver, Germany. Guest speaker, Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirmmayer, Chairman of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical



Gerhard and Elisabeth Köster

Alliance referred to ISM as an irreplaceable tool for reaching people with the gospel. The founders of ISM, Gerhard and Elisabeth Köster, reported on the history of this mission society, based in Halver, and symbolically turned over the leadership into younger hands.

ISM is the German branch of the worldwide Global Recordings Network founded in 1993 under which all the national organisations active on every continent are grouped. Here in Europe there are branches in the Netherlands,

Switzerland, France, Belgium, Austria, and Great Britain. The network offers evangelistic recordings in over 6,000 languages and dialects which already cover about 95% of the world population. By 2020 its expected that there will be recordings in 10,000 languages and dialects, so that 99.7% coverage of the world population would be achieved. ISM is a member of the German Evangelical Alliance Work Group for Migration and Integration (AMIN).

The foundation of the mission was laid in 1939 by the missionary Joy Ridderhof who started Gospel Recordings (today, Global Recordings Network-USA) in Los Angeles. Unable to return to the mission field in Honduras due to illness, she recorded texts of the gospel on vinyl records and sent them to the area where she had formerly worked. The idea of gospel recordings in different languages spread quickly. With time the production of records was replaced by cassettes, then CDs and mp3 files. Today distribution occurs to a large degree through the internet. Parallel to this, electrically independent, hand-wound or solar-powered record players, cassette recorders, and mp3 players have been developed for use in the most remote parts of the world.

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A joint platform for the following Bonn organizations on the basis of the Evangelical Alliance:

Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance
www.ead.de/akref

Culture and Science Publ.
www.vkwoonline.com

Giving Hands – International Charity
www.gebende-haende.de

Help Worldwide – International Charity
www.hilfe-weltweit.de

Institute for Pro-life and Family Studies
www.bucer.de/ilfw

International Institute for Islamic Studies of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.islaminstitut.net

International Institute for Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.iirf.eu

Martin Bucer Seminary
www.bucer.org

Pro Mundis e. V.
www.thomasschirmmayer.net

Theological Commission of “Hope for Europe” (European Evangelical Alliance)
www.hfe.org

Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance
www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/

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In his celebration sermon and afternoon lecture, Schirmmacher emphasized that ISM accomplishes tasks in four areas which are not covered by others:

1. The audio recordings reach about 900 million people who are unable to read, either because they are illiterate or they belong to an oral culture whose language has never been written down; and they reach at least 2 billion people who practically never read anything.
2. Audio recordings can be produced for many small language groups for which radio programs or Bible translations would involve too much work and be too expensive.
3. Audio recordings can be produced in many dialects and forms of slang in one and the same language so that people can truly hear their mother tongue.
4. Churches and missionaries can simultaneously offer hundreds of languages in multicultural societies. Due to migration, the number of languages and dialects spoken in any particular country is increasing. Nevertheless, it is still possible to offer each person the gospel in his or her mother language. In contrast, it would hardly be possible to have the Bible and other literature available in so many languages.



Thomas Schirmmacher during his ceremonial speech

So it is no wonder that there are Christian radio programs in only several hundred languages, the entire Bible in 518 languages, the New Testament in 1,275 languages (and some parts of the Bible in 2,798 languages), while at the same time there are audio evangelistic recordings in 6,000 languages, whereby this latter number is quickly growing.

In many places, this work is on the front line of world missions and is highly esteemed by other missionary societies around the world. It is no surprise that mission leaders from all over the globe consider Global Recordings Network to be indispensable. Dr. Dick Eastman, the International President of Every Home for Christ (in Germany: *Aktion in jedes Haus*) called Global Recordings “a true miracle in church history.” The President of Columbia International University, Robertson McQuilkin, has spoken of it as “one of the most effective movements in church history: No other organization can fulfill the task of reaching the masses of people groups in the world.”

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Links:

- <http://www.ism-ev.de>
- <http://globalrecordings.net/en/>
- Liste der 6000 Sprachen: <http://globalrecordings.net/en/languages>

Downloads:

- [Photo 1](#): Gerhard and Elisabeth Köster
- [Photo 2](#): Thomas Schirmmacher during his ceremonial speech

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